



Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor

For Immediate Release

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East Chicago Sewer Rate Case: OUCC Invites Consumer Comments

If you would like to comment on the Sanitary District of East Chicago's pending rate request, you have the chance to do so.

The Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC), the state agency representing consumer interests in cases before the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC), is reviewing the utility's request and is scheduled to file testimony on Feb. 9, 2022.

Written consumer comments

While using its legal and technical resources to review the district's request, including examining the utility's books and operations, the OUCC is inviting written comments from customers through Feb. 2, 2022.

Consumers who wish to submit written comments for the case record may do so via the OUCC's website at www.in.gov/oucc/2361.htm, by email at uccinfo@oucc.IN.gov, or by mail at:

OUCC Public Comments
Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor
115 W. Washington St., Suite 1500 SOUTH
Indianapolis, IN 46204

The OUCC needs to receive all written consumer comments no later than Feb. 2, 2022, so that it can: 1) Consider them in preparing its testimony and 2) File them with the Commission to be included in the case's formal evidentiary record. Comments should include the consumer's **name, mailing address**, and a reference to either "**IURC Cause No. 45632**" or **Sanitary District of East Chicago**. Consumers with questions about submitting written comments can contact the OUCC's consumer services staff toll-free at 1-888-441-2494.

Public field hearing

The IURC is currently scheduled to hold a public field hearing on the district's request on Tuesday, Jan. 11, 2022 at the East Chicago Public Library's Main Branch (2401 E. Columbus Dr.). The hearing is scheduled to begin at 6:00 p.m., local time, and is statutorily required in this case.

Consumers are encouraged to arrive by 5:45 p.m. for an overview of field hearing procedures and the rate case process. Attendees are required to comply with all local health and safety regulations.

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The field hearing's sole purpose is to receive public testimony.

- Consumers can speak directly to the Commission under oath and on the record.
- Oral comments during the hearing will become part of the case record. They will carry the same weight as written consumer comments the OUCC receives by Feb. 2, 2022.
- Utilities do not make presentations or answer questions during field hearings. The focus, again, is on public input. In this case, the district filed testimony and exhibits in October 2021.
- Commissioners are not allowed to answer questions about the case. They will ultimately render a decision after weighing evidence from the utility, the OUCC, and intervening parties.
- No final decisions will be made at the field hearing.

The OUCC's informational video offers an overview at www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0b6hMeRbt4.

Sworn comments presented at the field hearing will carry the same weight as written consumer comments filed by the OUCC.

Case overview

The Sanitary District of East Chicago is requesting a three-phase sewer rate increase. The utility's request, if approved, would raise the monthly residential sewer bill for a customer using 5,000 gallons from \$20.60 to \$26.21 when an order is issued in 2022, to \$30.36 on Sept. 1, 2023, and then to \$31.53 on Sept. 1, 2024.

In its filings, the utility states it is seeking the increase to cover higher operating and maintenance costs, along with improvements to aging infrastructure, including ultraviolet disinfection at the wastewater treatment plant, pump replacements, pump station rehabilitation, and lagoon improvements.

Current rates for the Sanitary District of East Chicago received city council approval in 2015. Indiana law allows the district to seek rate changes from either the IURC or the East Chicago Common Council.

The average monthly residential rate for sewer utilities under IURC jurisdiction is \$57.81.

A settlement agreement is possible in any legal proceeding. If an agreement is reached, the settling parties are required to present evidence showing it to be in the public interest. The IURC may approve, deny, or modify any settlement it considers.

A final Commission order is currently expected in July 2022.

Water rates and charges are not at issue in this case.

The OUCC is posting case updates online at www.in.gov/oucc/watersewer/key-cases-by-utility/east-chicago-sanitary-district. Case updates are also available through the agency's monthly electronic newsletter. Consumers can subscribe at www.in.gov/oucc/news.

(IURC Cause No. 45632)

The Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC) represents Indiana consumer interests before state and federal bodies that regulate utilities. As a state agency, the OUCC's mission is to represent all Indiana consumers to ensure quality, reliable utility services at the most reasonable prices possible through dedicated advocacy, consumer education, and creative problem solving.